

DATE: June 16, 2025

REPORT NO: CS-07-2025

SUBJECT: **A 120 Day overview of the West Lincoln Community Centre and Recreational programming**

CONTACT: Cynthia Summers, Director, Community and Protective Services

OVERVIEW:

- This preliminary report provides an overview and introduction to what the Administration sees as important considerations regarding the West Lincoln Community Centre (WLCC) and the current recreational programming.
- The report shares a draft preliminary vision proffered by the Administration, for consideration, review and input from Council. This thinking is in its infancy and as such is very open to changes and will undoubtedly evolve.
- This report reflects an approach which focuses on reducing burnout among full-time staff, strengthening community connection, and delivering services in a sustainable and inclusive way.
- It is also noteworthy that while this report reflects the perspective of the Administration with fresh eyes and observations, it is also informed by the feedback of staff and community residents.
- Finally, this vision is rooted in the belief that while the West Lincoln Community Centre, parks, and community spaces are already well-used and valued by residents, there is significant potential to elevate their impact. The goal is to transform these spaces into vibrant community hubs—not just during the day, but in the evenings and on weekends as well. This includes a future where residents help shape programming, part-time staff are empowered to take the lead, and technology is leveraged to deliver services more efficiently.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Information Report CS-07-2025 titled “A 120 Day overview of the West Lincoln Community Centre and Recreational programming” be received.

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

Theme #1

- BUILD - safe, connected, caring and active community

BACKGROUND:

Effective January 1, 2025, the organizational restructuring resulted in the creation of the new Community and Protective Services division, with the new Director of Community and Protective Services joining the Township of West Lincoln in February 2025. This report is to inform Council of the Administration's early actions and the vision and current priorities, in order to ensure alignment with the goals and objectives of Council. The Administration seeks and welcomes the input of Council.

CURRENT SITUATION:

The West Lincoln Community Centre and Recreational Programming

West Lincoln, like other municipal parks and recreation departments across Canada, face growing demands with limited resources. In West Lincoln, full-time staff are stretched thin, particularly during seasonal peaks and after-hours events. However, there are ways in which the Administration can attempt to address these stressors and to increase staff morale and improve recreational programming.

The West Lincoln Community Centre (WLCC) is a beautiful new infrastructure that serves as an anchor of community engagement in the Township. That said, its utilization can be low, with periods of underused space and programming. There is an opportunity to expand the use of the WLCC in a way which is flexible, creative and reflects residents' needs. A key focus needs to be on how to increase usership of the facility with an aim to create a bustling, vibrant community hub where fitness, fun, the library and social services are brought together into one location.

There is also a demand for low-cost family friendly activities, with both youth and senior programming. To respond to this demand there is a desire for WLCC to provide more "in-house" programming and to increase community-based programs.

This report is the result of an "early stages", fourth month needs assessment with proposed short-term actions/suggestions that will likely improve key performance measurements. This report and ideas will be complemented and expanded by the input and vision of the soon to be hired new Community Services Manager and the release of the new Parks and Recreation Master plan in the fall 2025. It will be imperative to utilize the Master Plan to identify gaps and opportunities to develop new programming and increase the customer experience at West Lincoln parks and recreational facilities. Since February 2025, the WLCC has already begun to evolve its service delivery model, offering more flexible, customer-focused responses to its community. Recently when requested, the Administration offered the use of the WLCC for Elections Canada for

early voting and election day voting. After community input and at their request, the Administration also introduced early registration for summer day camp for West Lincoln residents only and expanded the number of summer camp spaces for local youth. As a result of this change, 100% of summer camp spots are now filled with local West Lincoln youth. Most recently the Administration committed to collaborating with the Mayor's Youth advisory committee to engage our summer campers in the annual Christmas card competition/event, with youth advisors leading the summer campers in this fun "Christmas in the Summer" activity. Many collaboration opportunities exist such as a recent agreement made with Canadian Blood Services to host blood donation clinics on a quarterly basis at the WLCC.

However, there remain some challenges, and this report suggests some shifts that align with modern practices and will improve customer service. These include the following:

- Creating flexible, community-driven programming
- Expanding the role of part-time staff
- Leveraging technology

Given the organizational and strategic changes that 2025 has brought, the Parks and Recreation Division is currently in a period of transition.

The recruitment process is currently underway for the Manager of Community Services position. This existing role has been redesigned with an expanded mandate to oversee all aspects of the Community Centre, including facilities, parks, and programming, ensuring a more integrated and strategic approach to service delivery.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is also scheduled to be finalized for Fall 2025, which will further align long-term goals with this renewed leadership structure. At this point the consultant MGA Group has advised that a draft Plan will be ready to present to Council in September 2025. Following the input of Council, one further feedback opportunity will be provided to West Lincoln residents, with a final report being presented to Council in October 2025.

THE PROPOSED VISION

Programming That Reflects the Community's interests and needs

Programs should be shaped with resident input, ensuring they reflect local interests and priorities. Administration should be flexible and able to adapt programming as needed to meet community needs.

To maintain connection, feedback tools and engagement methods such as below can be continued or increased:

- Online surveys and idea forums

- Timely and regular communication on information boards and social media regarding recreational programs and events.
- Town Halls where the Administration can engage and hear from community residents and groups directly.
- Regular engagement to seek targeted input from community groups and services, and advisory groups such as the West Lincoln Age Friendly Advisory committee and the Mayor's Youth Advisory committees, as examples.

Increased Regularly Scheduled Programming

At the WLCC many popular programs are offered on a drop-in basis. However, there is an opportunity to provide more consistent, lower cost programming, some of which may be staff lead and some (such as yoga now) which is provided by external instructors. There may be opportunities to use our open gym time slots for staff-lead pick-up basketball games or other activities based on public demand, hosted by our full / part-time staff.

As well as this type of programming, it is important to maintain popular longer cycle events that people can count on, weekly, monthly, or annually such as:

- Music, Market and Park It (6 events for summer 2025)
- Movie Nights (4 events for summer 2025)
- Santa Claus Parade (November 2025)
- Harvest Routes (Fall 2025)
- Farmers Market – Exploring opportunity to move this event to Saturdays in 2026*

Maintaining facility operations over the Christmas break is essential, as this period typically sees high demand from families seeking daily activities. To this end, the Administration will open and provide programming at the WLCC on Boxing Day this year, in addition to the regular days of service. In addition, the Administration is currently evaluating the potential for the WLCC to be open on Sundays in response to growing community interest. This would maximize use of the facility during otherwise inactive hours and better align with resident needs.

Exploration of new Opportunities and Collaboration

The Administration has been exploring a partnership with LiveBarn to provide virtual, live broadcasting of minor league hockey. Currently 98 municipalities in Ontario use this service, including nine municipalities within the Niagara Region. The recommendation to collaborate with LiveBarn is being presented to Council for approval.

The Administration is also pleased to share that the WLCC has re-established a partnership with the Canadian Red Cross to host regular blood donation clinics at the West Lincoln Community Centre. This initiative reflects the Township's ongoing commitment to supporting essential community services and fostering partnerships that

provide direct benefits to residents.

The Recreation unit is also in the early stages of assessing possible new hockey league opportunities such as a Senior Hockey League for adults 20-45 to support other key demographics. These new types of initiatives must be considered carefully within the context of the support of West Lincoln residents. If after some early evaluation this option appears viable and beneficial to the community, this will be brought to Council for consideration and approval.

Going forward it is important to create space for new events and activities shaped directly by West Lincoln residents.

Making the Most of our other Community Spaces

Our parks, trails, and facilities can host a wider variety of community-driven programming year-round.

Some Ideas:

- Utilizing our rural Community Halls for additional summer and March break camps and programs to ensure programming across West Lincoln.
- Deploying Recreation Ambassadors with mobile kits for park-based programs.
- Extending trail and greenspace use into evenings and weekends by offering (for example) Field Naturalist walks, Bird identification classes, guided walking groups, Fitness Stations etc. Creating flexible, community-driven programming.

Reviewing the Fee Structure:

There is an opportunity to review the current recreation and facility fee structure to support the growing needs of the Community Services division and West Lincoln community. This includes looking at a review of fees for non- West Lincoln residents.

Supporting and ensuring well-equipped and skilled Recreation Staff:

Our front line staff serve as the frontline representatives of both the WLCC and the broader Township of West Lincoln. They are often the first point of contact for residents and visitors, playing a key role in shaping public perception and ensuring a welcoming, responsive experience.

The Administration is currently assessing the needs and efficiencies of staff and reviewing the staffing complement in order to provide effective customer service. It is important that all staff are confident, empowered, and trained in customer service skills and conflict resolution.

Training Full and Part Time Staff

With training and support, part-time Recreation Leads can oversee after-hours programming and payments, helping reduce reliance on full-time staff.

- Continuing with our cost effective staffing model, which includes a combination of full-time staff, part-time workers and seasonal employees to help manage costs.
- Ensuring excellence in customer service and reducing risk to the Township by ensuring that staff are trained to provide the services required and to properly be equipped to deal with complaints or conduct issues.
- Training to allow for the extension of evening hours to take payments at the Community Centre.
- Assigning trained part-time leads for weekend and evening coverage to alleviate full time staff.
- Offering a consistent avenue and process to log and address complaints, as well as de-escalate issues in real time.

These actions will allow for an ease in shift transition when all staff understand facility, programming and ActiveNet software payment processes. In the longer term, a review of a potential weekend delegation strategy should be considered, where programming, payment processing (purchase/leases) and minor dispute resolution can be delegated to part-time recreation leads.

Making more efficient use of Technology

Technology can simplify operations and improve resident access.

- Maximize ActiveNet for mobile payments, drop-ins, and public calendars and empower part-time staff to provide this service.
- Use QR codes in parks to link to registration, feedback, and event details.
- Digitally coordinate staffing schedules and event coverage

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications as a result of this Report.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTS:

This report was reviewed by the Director of Corporate Services, the CAO, and the Legal and Legislative Services Department.

CONCLUSION:

This report is for Council's information only; however, while it seeks to provide insight

into the Administration's current vision and ideas, it also seeks the input of Council and its direction regarding Council's vision for the WLCC and recreation programming in West Lincoln. Any plans or directions will be guided and executed according to Council's vision and direction.

SCHEDULE(S)

Prepared & Submitted by:

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